



# Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ October 2018

## ★ From the Director

This is the third year for our Serving Those Who Served program and the momentum is growing! Veteran Organizations or organizations that assist Veterans can register a project for volunteers to assist from 11-05 to 11/12. To register your project, please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/STWS2018>. Once we have the projects, we will list them at [www.illinois.gov/veterans](http://www.illinois.gov/veterans). You will be able to choose the project you would like to volunteer and register! Our Veterans put us first when they served for us. This is the week when we can show our appreciation and put them first, by lending a helping hand.



Stephen Curda

We invite you to join us in the State Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday, November 7– 11:00 am as we present a special Veterans Day ceremony honoring our Illinois Veterans. We will also have the display of Illinois Veterans in Rotunda. This display is created through our partnership with the Senate Republican Caucus. For more information on how to have your veteran as part of this display, read the “Honoring Veterans” article in this newsletter.

Our Veteran Service Officers (VSO) are trained and accredited by the US Department of Veteran Affairs to provide free assistance to our Illinois Heroes, their dependents and survivors. These men and women go above and beyond the call of duty to assist our veterans. To find the closest VSO to where you live go to <https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/ServiceOffices.aspx>

We are working hard on the final preparations for our Honor 200 program that will be held during the Illinois Bicentennial Gala December 3 at the United Center in Chicago. We will send a letter to each nominated Veteran to let them know if they were selected. We will announce the 200 winners on (date)

Thank you to everyone who nominated one of our incredible Illinois Veterans. They were all deserving! And congratulations to our outstanding 200! We look forward to seeing you at the Gala.

Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to “Stand Up and Be Counted!” by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you’re helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. [Click here to register.](#)

**We Thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to You.**

## ★ New employees



### **Brittany Hawkins**

Brittany started her employment with DVA on 8/1/2018 and is the new attorney in the Central office in Springfield. Prior to joining DVA, Brittany was a Supervisory Regional Counsel with DCFS in Springfield for almost eleven years dealing with child welfare litigation.

Before this role, Brittany was an Assistant Attorney General in the General Law Bureau for two years in Springfield, and prior to working at the Attorney General's Office, she was an Assistant State's Attorney in Vermilion County for two years primarily prosecuting child abuse and neglect cases as well as juvenile delinquency cases. In her spare time, Brittany enjoys playing soccer and volleyball and traveling with her husband, Chad, watching her kids (Karley and Kamden) play sports.



### **Ahmad Khreisheh**

Ahmad is a Service Officer in the Appeals Division/Claim Management Center. He is an Army Infantry Veteran who served in Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (05-07) and Operation Enduring Freedom (07-09). He served as a Personal Security Officer, Inter-

preter and Infantryman in the 4th Infantry Division, out of Fort Hood, TX. Since his discharge from the military he has been in leadership and management positions, while earning his Bachelor's in Psychology and Master's in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. He recently joined the Chicago Appeals Division and is very excited to be working with Veterans and their loved ones to help them navigate the complex system designed to help servicemen and women cope with and adjust to the lack of order in the civilian world.



### **Bonnie Mosley**

Bonnie transferred to IDVA from the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. She served in the Air Force and the Air National Guard from 2001 – 2010 and is currently attending Benedictine University, where she is majoring in Organizational Leadership.

Bonnie's husband is also a USAF veteran, for 15 years and they have four children. In her spare time, she enjoys camping, swimming and various other outdoor activities with her family.



### **Russell Litko named Acting Assistant Director**



Russell Litko was named IDVA Assistant Director in August 2018. Prior to joining IDVA, Russell served in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve in a variety of roles. While on Active Duty for 3 years Russ was stationed at Fort Benning, GA and Fort Lewis, WA. In Fort Lewis he served as a Infantry Platoon Leader and

Company Executive Officer. In 2009 Russ deployed to southern Afghanistan as the Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon Leader.

Upon completion of his Active duty time in 2010, Russ transitioned to the U.S. Army Reserve. While in the Army Reserves Russ has served as a Company Commander, Operations Officer, Budget Officer and currently is serving as a Human Resource Officer. Russ most recently worked with the 85th Support Command, in Arlington Heights, as a Human Resource Specialist where he provided Human Resource support to over 3,500 Army Reserve Soldiers. Russ lives in Downers Grove with his wife who a Special Education Coordinator for School District 108. Together, they have a happy and healthy daughter.

### **Ginny Narsete named Chief of Staff**



Ginny Narsete, Master Sergeant, USAF (Retired) served a long and distinguished career in the United States Air Force and the Environmental Protection Agency serving the capacity of public affairs. She came out of retirement to serve veterans and assume the duties of

Chief of Staff for the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. Ginny Narsete enlisted in the U.S. Air Force shortly after high school and served in Public Affairs during the Vietnam War. Later, during Operation Desert Storm, she served as public affairs officer for the Commander of CENTCOM, General Charles Horner. Her last duty deployment was during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002 in Ramstein, Germany; she was assigned to the Crisis Action Team, preparing daily briefings to the 4-star general commanding the European Theatre activities on the War on Terrorism.

She has worked for the Department of Veteran Affairs, AGS&R Communications and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She was responsible for strategic exercise planning and disaster response and spent over six months as a public information officer on Hurricane Katrina. She also served as the Deputy Public Information Officer at the Deep Horizon BP Oil Spill in the Gulf.

## **★ Retirements**

### **Harry Sawyer**

IDVA Assistant Director Sawyer retired this past summer after 33 years of service to our Illinois Veterans. He joined IDVA in 1982 as a VSO and worked over three decades assisting our Illinois Heroes and family members. As a young man, Harry enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served aboard the USS Agerholm (DD 826), including a tour off the coast of Vietnam. Completing his enlistment in 1970, he received an honorable discharge and returned to Illinois where he worked as a florist until 1979, when he began assisting his fellow veterans as a service officer with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Sawyer is a member of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other organizations. Thank you, Harry, for your service and your leadership here at IDVA.



*Harry Sawyer with the IDVA Staff in Chicago*

## ★ Medical Providers' Loan Repayment Program

The Veterans' Home Medical Providers' Loan Repayment Program provides for the payment of eligible educational loans as an incentive for medical providers to pursue and continue their careers at State of Illinois veterans' homes. The annual award to qualified physicians, certified nurse practitioners, registered professional nurses, certified nursing assistants and licensed practical nurses may be up to \$5,000 to repay their student loan debt. This award may be received for up to a maximum of four years.

For more information go to - <http://www.isac.org/students/after-college/forgiveness-programs/veterans-home-nurse-loan-repayment-program.html>

## ★ Car Show at Quincy Veterans home

The Lugsnuts Endless Summer Car Show was held on the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy in September. Gary Beck from Macomb was awarded the Veterans Choice Award. The car show is very well known and raises funding for the Veteran Home's Activity Fund. Gary told us that he was deeply moved that his car was chosen, and this is the one car show that he looks forward to attending every year. He loves seeing the residents enjoy the cars and knows the proceeds go towards a worthy cause (the activity fund).



## ★ Flag Ceremony



Thank you to the members of the American Legion Post 37 in Quincy who recently destroyed tattered and torn flags at a flag-burning ceremony at the Illinois Veterans Home. The flags were shown honor and properly disposed of in this ceremony.

*(l-r) Veterans Home resident Frank Gavenia, Wayne Griep, Tom Geise, Paul Altgilbers, Roger Schwengel, Les Lair & Bruce Roberts.*

## ★ Honoring Veterans

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Senate Republican Caucus are honoring the military service and sacrifice of all our men and women in Illinois. We encourage you to submit a photograph and written story of any veteran to be displayed in the Illinois State Capitol Rotunda beginning Monday, November 5 through Friday, November 16. Please email a photo and written story (max: 250 words) along with the following information: name, military branch (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, National Guard, Navy) and conflict served (Afghanistan, Iraq, September 11, Gulf War, Vietnam, Korea, WWII, WWI, Peacetime, other). Military photos are preferred but not necessary.

Email your submissions to [VeteransDay@sgop.ilga.gov](mailto:VeteransDay@sgop.ilga.gov) or send your story and photo to: Veterans Day Wall 309G State House Springfield, IL 62706



## ★ Honor 200



The Honor 200 Veterans will be recognized at the Illinois Bicentennial Gala at the United Center in Chicago on December 3, 2018. These Veterans from across Illinois who have gone above and beyond to serve their fellow Veterans and Communities will be honored. In partnership with the Illinois Bicentennial Office the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs will honor the work of 200 Veterans from across the State. On (date) we announce the 200 honorees.

The Boeing Company, Walgreens and Com Ed are the Presenting Sponsors of the Illinois Bicentennial Veterans Program and Honor 200 Program.

## ★ Pumpkins donated

The Mt. Sterling IL Correctional Facility donated over 60 pumpkins for IVHQ! The inmates grew the pumpkins, harvested them, and delivered to the Veterans Home. Attached is a photo of the workers.



## ★ Follow us



IDVA website

[www.illinois.gov/veterans](http://www.illinois.gov/veterans)

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs](https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisDepartmentOfVeteransAffairs)

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisWomenVeterans/#>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/ILVetsAffairs>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/il-dva>

## ★ IDVA Calendar

**Oct. 19 - Building Dedication and Naming**

– Quincy Veterans Home

**Oct. 20 - Veterans Advisory Council**

– Manteno Veterans Home

**Oct. 27 - Veterans Advisory Council**

– Anna Veterans Home

**Nov. 4 - 17th Annual Mayfair Remembrance Day**

– Chicago

**Nov. 5 - 12 - Serving Those Who Serve**

**Nov. 6 - Election Day** – Office closed

**Nov. 7 - Veterans Wall of Honor Program**

– Springfield Capitol Rotunda

**Nov. 12 - Veterans Day Observed** – Office closed

## ★ We Need Your Projects

### Serving Those Who Served

★ November 5 - 12 ★

If you are a veteran and/or a Veterans Service Organization who needs assistance with a project, please register your project/event, so we can get volunteers to help you!

To register your project, please go to

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/STWS2018>

We will promote your project/event and assist you to find volunteers to assist you!

Questions? email the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs at [IDVAMedia@illinois.gov](mailto:IDVAMedia@illinois.gov)



State of Illinois  
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